

C. H. S.

BANDWAGON

CHRISTMAS ISSUE, 1952

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— The Circusiana Magazine —

C. H. S.

Bandwagon

P. O. Box 235
Richmond, Indiana

DECEMBER ISSUE, 1952

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15¢ a single copy
\$1.25 a year in U.S.A.

Advertising rates—
\$1.00 per col. inch

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The Editor Says

Did you get your money back from Frances Templeton? We know that Bill Kasiska got his alright—for he wrote and told us. But we also had a letter from another member asking about the matter—and leading us to think that maybe he didn't write to the Post Office Department as we suggested in the last issue. It's a fact—you won't get anything if you don't ask for it. From all we can learn, Templeton didn't start out to cheat anyone, but he did bite off a lot more than he could chew. He expected to get enough orders for his books to enable him to get them printed. You know a publisher has to have money in hand before he will start on a book of that type. Anyway, not enough money came in, and with his hopes at a high level, Templeton kept waiting for the Golden Goose or something of that sort. Anyway, we hope you all either got or get your money back. If you didn't write in though—maybe you will not get it. We don't know—we are just guessing, too.

NEW MEMBERS

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WHY NOT GIVE YOUR
FRIENDS A BANDWAGON
SUBSCRIPTION FOR
CHRISTMAS?
\$1.25

Merry Christmas

and

Happy New Year

LET'S MAKE 1953 OUR BEST CIRCUS
SEASON YET

JOHN VOGELSANG, No. 285
NILES, MICHIGAN

WHITE ELEPHANT

Sent in by George Chindahl

The following is a description of Barnum's sacred elephant, now in London: Height, 7 ft., 6 in.; age, 15 years; weight, 6,400 lbs.; and color as follows: The entire trunk from the free end to a point about three inches above the eyes is a flesh-color. The tips of the ears and upper portions of both fore-legs are likewise a flesh-color, with spots of the same tint, eight to ten inches in diameter, on the back and sides and on the tail. The rest of the body of the animal is several shades lighter than the ordinary elephants, and resembles a slate or ash color. Its tusks are beautifully formed, white, and project nearly two feet, while the toes are very light, nearly pink, and the eyes a light yellowish hazel. A marked feature of the beast deserving special mention is the tail, which reaches to the ground.

Copied from New York Clipper, February 23, 1884, p. 831, owned by Richard Conover

GEORGE SPONGBERG DIES

Word has been received of the death of George Sponberg. George played first clarinet with Carl Claus on Barnum and Baileys Circus band in 1903-4-5-6. He was a member of the first band to ever ride in the historic Two Hemispheres bandwagon and was on the wagon when the 40 horse team picture was taken in Brooklyn in 1903. Jim Thomas was the driver.

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TO

All Members C. H. S.
and C. F. A.

AND

Old Troupers Everywhere

"If Clouds this year have dimmed your Sky,
Or this and that has made the going rough
My prayer for you this Christmas Season,
Is that your skies will clear enough,
For you to have the most Joyous Christmas
of them all."

FRED BAILEY THOMPSON

C. H. S. No. 410

Circuses Sold Concessions To Pickpockets in Old Days

Reprinted from *The Atlanta Journal*, Thursday, Nov. 9, 1950

Among those out at the circus yesterday, savoring again an atmosphere that is a mixture of hurried glitter and the stable, was a wiry little man who had traveled with circuses when they went by gilded wagon and were lit by oil lamps.

He was 62-year-old Fred Thompson, former circus musician, clown and press agent, and now a resident of Clarkston, Ga. When he was 16, Fred was playing a trombone in the orchestra of First Methodist Church of Madison, Ga.

Then one day old Judge H. W. Baldwin stopped Fred's anxious father on the street and told him bluntly, "I knew that boy of yours never would amount to anything. You taught him how to play the trombone and now he's gone off with the circus."

Fred had left with his parents' reluctant blessing. He has no regrets, although in those days the circus people were a hard lot and some owners sold concessions to pickpockets on a percentage basis.

"Those times are over," he interposed. "Circus folks today are the finest people in the world—I mean it. They don't have time to be bad."

One of the earliest circuses he traveled with was that of Rose Killian, a tall, skinny woman who could cower a drunken roustabout with a look, or at least with a look and a tent pin, and "with a heart as tender as a chicken."

Rose had a wagon show. When she neared a town she would halt her red and gold-leafed wagons and march up and down them like a drill master, lining them up for the great parade. And they would roll down the dusty road with a blare of trumpets. There were very few hearts in small towns that didn't quiver in response.

Rose would stand in the lead wagon and wave flatteringly to the town merchants, in the doorways of their stores, and call them by their first names, and shout hoarsely, "Boys, it's even bigger and better this year!"

* * *

MR. THOMPSON worked for Barnum and Bailey, Hagenbeck and Wallace, the Robinson Shows, and Charlie Sparks' circus.

"They put me to plugging the press," he explained his wanderings, "and I'd get some good publicity for a show and bring in a straw house and another outfit would come along and offer me a better proposition."

He added that a straw house got its name from the habit of laying straw in front of the regular seats when a circus was sold out. Additional customers could be accommodated there. The practice was discontinued after a horse racing around the tent in the traditional Ben Hur spectacle threw a shoe and injured a small boy. His family sued and collected \$25,000, as Mr. Thompson recalls it.

(Continued on Page 7)

The Modern English Circus

Sent in by C. W. Maloney

Reprinted from Cambridge Daily News, March 11, 1952

A big show in a Big way in a Big Top.

That is the most apt description of Chipperfield's Circus, which opened its touring season on Midsummer Common yesterday—the first performances of a week's stay there.

One might also add that the whole goes with a Big Bang, particularly the sensational final item, by Les Raluys, in which a man and girl are shot together from a big cannon, landing in a net on the other side of the ring. If the bang doesn't take your breath away, the flight of the human cannonballs will.

Tiger Rides An Elephant

For the rest, this first-class circus has all the usual acts and several not so usual. In the latter class comes Ranee, a tiger who rides on the back of the beast's native enemy, an elephant.

A whole collection of animals show their paces and their tricks. A group of polar and grizzly bears performs cleverly. One of the "grizzlies" turns head over heels with the greatest of ease. There is a touch of comedy in their final act, in which they go down a slide. One grizzly is most reluctant to make his exit.

Next come a number of African lions, looking and sounding as fearsome as the tigers. They, too, obeyed their trainer well.

Horses and circuses are, of course, inseparable. Even here Chipperfield's produce the original touch. Usually the animals shown are lithe types, but here one of the troupes consists of heavy Percherons. They display a skittishness not usually associated—fortunately—with horses whose normal function is drawing carts.

Unusual, too, are the sleek and lovely palominos, the only stud of these beautiful Canadian horses in Europe. Delightful Shetland ponies also show their cleverness, while the only group of Zebras in Britain display complete accuracy in sorting themselves out according to the numbers on their harness.

Dancing Horses

A polished high school riding act is a picture of grace, while a "cowboy round-up" brings plenty of action. One must not forget, incidentally, the horse which dances the foxtrot, polka and samba.

Even elephants dance in this circus. Two of ten shown in the ring at the same time do quite a skilful valeta. Another does a "hand stand" on his two front feet. Yet another carries a girl round the ring by holding her head in his mouth.

At the other end of the size scale are the performing poodles, who walk upright and do a skipping act enmasse. Some of the dogs, too, prove efficient bare-back riders—though not displaying quite the agility of the girl who presents a clever performance of trick-riding earlier in the show.

Mention must be made, too, of the cleverness of the performing sea-lions, one of which "walks" a horizontal bar hanging on by his front flippers only. Another juggles, a third plays an enthusiastic if not altogether tuneful solo on a series of motor horns.

Thrills In Mid-Air

Thrilling performances by acrobats, trapeze artists and wire-walkers have their part in this typical circus. A young couple swing nonchantly at the top of the tent and end their show with a spine-chilling, electrifying finale. The Great Arturos performs gymnastics at the top of a fifty-foot swaying pole. The Dresslers do incredible things on the high wire; one stands on his head on it; another rides a cycle over it, two more cross each other in "mid-wire."

A whirlwind group of tumblers show tremendous energy and skill, while the Ortonis bring comedy and cleverness to a horizontal bar act.

Mention of comedy brings us to the clowns. A troupe of midgets keep the audience vastly entertained with their antics in between the main items, while Les French, a clown duo, fool in first-class style with a variety of musical instruments. They are both clever and comical.

And finally there is Jackie Sloan, who walks on high stilts as easily as we walk on our two feet.

The show is most slickly presented, with each item timed so that it ends at the ideal moment when one would willingly see more of it.

S.J.A.

CIRCUSES SOLD CONCESSIONS (Cont'd)

PRESS AGENTING for an old-time and uninhibited circus was a personally exciting and hazardous business, he said with a sigh.

"I'd be sitting in a picnic chair in a tent, beating a small typewriter on a trunk, and an aerialist and his wife would get to fussing and she'd throw a pan or something at him and I'd duck and keep on writing what I was writing about them—what a beautiful love story they were."

On another occasion, a tiger escaped from the steel runway to the arena and slithered through the legs of Mr. Thompson, who was loitering in the wings. "He was just scared of all the people," he said, making it sound so like an ordinary incident that I started not to use it in this column. "He was looking for a place to hide. His trainer found him under the flap of the tent and rolled him up in a net."

Mr. Thompson is spending his retirement in the rather prosaic work of writing books and magazine articles about circus life, and, presumably, does not have to draw too much upon his imagination.

Editor's Note: Fred Bailey Thompson is a very able member of C. H. S.

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THIS AND MANY OTHER PICTURES, ALONG WITH
VERY INTERESTING STORIES, IN
MILLS BROS. CIRCUS
1952 ROUTE BOOK

\$1.00

FRED W. STAFFORD, Jr.

17 BARBARA ROAD
BRISTOL, CONNECTICUT

Memoriam

Submitted by James W. Kelley, CHS 113

TROSTL—Evy, 17, member of the Great Arturo high wire act, died as a result of fall from the wire Nov. 14, 1951 during afternoon performance of Polack Bros. Eastern Unit, at the Baltimore Armory.

★ ★

The clown white's streaked with tears tonight,
the band has lost its touch,
The gags don't seem so funny
and the stops don't 'mount to much;
'Cause it's hard to keep 'em laughing
when you're thinking all the while
Of that kid out on the wire,
with her happy sort of smile.

And you live the whole thing over
as you do your walk-around,
You see her on the wire,
and you see her on the ground.
And you ponder on the ways of fate
while you try to figure why
An old has-been like you will live,
and a happy kid will die.

Now the lights are out, the show is done
and your props are stowed away,
Your heart is somewhat lighter
as you bow your head to pray,
'Cause you know that way up yonder
in that Big Lot in the sky,
There's a special tent for troupers,
and you'll meet her bye and bye.

★ ★

Merry Christmas

TO FRIENDS AND FRIENDLY ENEMIES
EVERYWHERE. STILL WITH IT AND
FOR IT.

* * *

Walter B. Fox

P. O. Box 147

MOBILE 2, ALA.

Merry Christmas Everyone

CLARENCE SHANK, No. 336

"The Jewelry Dealer"

CAMDEN, OHIO

JAMES W. KELLEY, CHS No. 113

NORTH HAVEN, CONN.

WISHES EVERYONE A

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Season's Greetings

TO EVERYONE

JOHN WALLING, CHS No. 496

SPRINGFIELD, TENN.

Christmas Greetings

AND A

Happy New Year

CHARLES B. KISTLER, CHS No. 128

ALLENTOWN, PA.

Best Wishes for a Happy Circus Year

FROM

STARBUCK, MINNESOTA

EDW. S. OLSON, CHS No. 513

Season's Greetings from

PAUL LUCKEY AND THE SAUK COUNTY

CIRCUS BAND

BARABOO, WISCONSIN

GREETINGS FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA
TO ALL MEMBERS OF C. H. S.

*May 1953 Bring Health
and
Prosperity to All*

G. E. "Leo" Leopold, No. 447
VANCOUVER 5, B. C. CANADA

TO ALL MY FRIENDS IN SHOW BUSINESS
AND TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
"CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY"
IN AMERICA

I wish you all

*A Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year*

Larry Turnbull, No. 447
HORDEN, COUNTY DURHAM, ENGLAND

MURRAY "Long Hair" GUY, CHS No. 193

Holiday Greetings

TO ALL MEMBERS

JEANNETTE, PA.

Merry Christmas to Everyone

DICK CONOVER, CHS No. 206

XENIA, OHIO

Season's Greetings

FROM

LEONARD WEIGLE

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA

Not a member, but always for it and with it.

Holiday Greetings

FROM THE OLDEST C. H. S. MEMBER

C. H. "Dad" WHITE," No. 101

FREDONIA, KANSAS



Season's Greetings

And Best Wishes for a Prosperous Circus Season
in 1953

★ ★

BOB, AGNES, and ANN KING

(That Positively is NOT Bob in the Picture with Hugo Schmitt)

Christmas Greetings

AND A

Happy New Year

FROM

F. C. Fisher & Son

BOX 104

JACKSON, MICH.

HOWARD A. GUSLER, No. 478

Sends Greetings

FROM

ELGIN, ILLINOIS

CHARLES HILL, No. 519

OUR YOUNGEST MEMBER

SENDS

Holiday Greetings

JEANNETTE, PA.



*C*HRISTMAS BELLS ARE RINGING,
CAROLS FILL THE AIR,
FRIENDS AND FAMILIES MEETING
JOY REIGNS EVERYWHERE.

CHRISTMAS TREES ARE GLOWING,
WREATHS ON EVERY DOOR,
BEST OF ALL — IT'S TIME AGAIN,
TO GREET GOOD FRIENDS ONCE MORE.

★ ★

Bette Leonard

C. H. S. President

P. S. Fred says Merry Christmas, too.